

Idaho Press Tribune, Thursday, Jan. 28, 2010 – by Mike Butts

Gem, Elmore counties could join fast-growing College of Western Idaho

College president speaks to budget committee, projects 6,000 students for fall

BOISE — Gem and Elmore counties could soon join Canyon and Ada counties in the College of Western Idaho's taxing district. CWI president Bert Glandon called the move "imminent" Wednesday at his presentation before the Legislature's budget-writing committee.

Glandon also said the college, based in Nampa, could grow to about 6,000 credit students this fall. The recently appointed president told the Joint Finance-Appropriations Committee that CWI has set enrollment records for a new community college and its growth has been impossible to predict. Current enrollment for credit classes is 4,837. "We are nationally recognized as the community college of the future," Glandon said, because the college opened with such large enrollment numbers and has grown so fast since.

CWI had 1,200 students when it opened last January. Glandon said he expects rapid enrollment growth to continue for 18 months to two years. He asked the committee to consider Gov. Butch Otter's suggestion of a supplemental funding for the college of just more than \$1 million for this fiscal year.

For Gem and Elmore counties to join the CWI taxing district would require voter approval in those counties and it would have to be mostly initiated by them, College of Western Idaho board member M.C. Niland said.

Niland said she has received inquiries regarding the inclusion of the two counties from officials in the counties. About 300 students from outside of Canyon and Ada counties attended CWI last fall, Glandon said.

Meanwhile enrollment projections at the college are hard to come by, Glandon said, and no one anticipated the growth the college has had in such a short time. "We are pioneers," he said. "We are finding our way each and every day. ... We don't know how big we should be."

With its current facilities CWI has room for 6,435 students. The college has 106 full-time faculty and 230 adjunct, or part-time, faculty. Sixty-eight of the full-time faculty came from Boise State University's Larry Selland College of Applied Technology, which CWI assumed control of last year.

CWI's property tax rate is far lower than those of the other two Idaho community colleges, College of Southern Idaho and Northern Idaho College. CWI's is at \$13.11 per \$100,000 while the other schools are at about \$80. Part of that is because the other schools have smaller tax bases on which to draw from, CWI board member Mark Dunham said. CWI board members did not rule out the possibility of the need to raise CWI's tax rate in the future.